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COMOR-D-7/51

55 of 76

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29 August 1966

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

MEMORANDUM FOR HOLDERS OF USIB-D-41.12/23

SUBJECT : Recommendations 18(6)(9a) and 18(6)(b) of the
11 July 1966 Report of the NSAM 156 Committee

REFERENCE : USIB-D-41.12/23 (COMOR-D-7/51)
17 August 1966, Limited Distribution

1. In restricted session at the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) meeting of 25 August with the Deputy Director, National Reconnaissance Office (DD/NRO) in attendance, the Chairman, Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance (COMOR) began the Board's consideration of this subject by a brief explanation of the reference report. He noted that when COMOR had looked at both of the recommendations it found that the ultimate disposition of either item was not crystal clear at this time. COMOR, however, had been able to reach unanimous agreement on an initial procedure for dealing with Recommendation 18(6)(b). In discussing Recommendation 18(6)(a) involving the question of removing the fact of the U. S. satellite reconnaissance program from codeword control to a SECRET or TOP SECRET classification, [] commented that on the surface it may seem silly not to do this since the Russians know that we have such a program. However, looking at the problem in detail, COMOR (except for the State Member) felt that there was such a danger in uninformed discussion of this program that it would be better to clear a few additional State and NASA people so that any discussion would be based on accurate knowledge. After these additional people had been cleared and had looked at the situation, COMOR would in six months see if the problem had been solved or whether there was a need to take further steps.

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GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification

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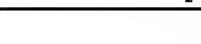
Members Holders
USIB-D-41. 12/23
(COMOR-D-7/51)
29 August 1966
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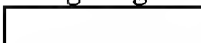


2. In response to the Chairman's request for reactions, the Acting State Member said that he hoped the other members had read Tab A of the reference which was a good expression of State's point of view.

 then called attention to some of the features of the COMOR report as follows:

a. Regarding the first sentence of paragraph 2, he did not think this was a true statement. First, there were many indications that the Soviets do have an adequate idea of the success of the U.S. satellite program. Secondly, we will never know whether the Soviets developed their very good system by their own efforts entirely, or whether there have been some breaches in our security controls.

b. With reference to the third sentence of paragraph 2, which states in effect that removal from compartmental controls of the fact of the program or of its product would "increase the security risk,"  pointed out that nowhere else in the COMOR report was there an explanation or discussion of how the security risk would be increased. He thought this was the \$64 question that the Board should address. Nevertheless, the report does mention but does not balance two existing security risks which would be reduced by relaxation: (a) the third sentence of paragraph 3 does mention the existence of loose talk by uncleared officials but the report does not discuss how serious this problem is and (b) the last two sentences of paragraph 3 mentioned but did not weigh the existing risk of warnings by TALENT Security Officers to uncleared persons.

3.  then observed that the COMOR report contains no discussion of the benefits of the relaxation of KH products; such as general convenience, cost, saving, mapping, shortcuts, the importance to NASA, etc. In short, since there was no discussion and weighing of the security risks as against benefits of various kinds,  believed that the report is not responsive to the USIB request to give "due consideration to the broad implications of the NSAM 156 Report from the intelligence viewpoint."

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

Memo to Holders
USIB-D-41. 12/23
(COMOR-D-7/51)
29 August 1966
Limited Distribution



4. On the merits of the question the Acting State Member felt it was important to distinguish between relaxation concerning the fact of the program and relaxation of controls on the products:

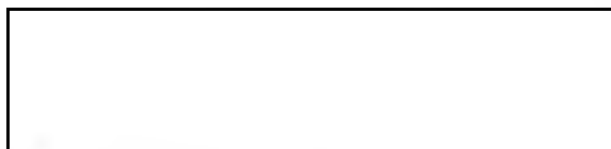
a. On the fact of the program: in 1960 the problem was to keep the existence of the program secret from the Soviets because of the danger that Soviet knowledge of it might bring some kind of retaliation. In 1966 the problem is completely different; that is, to avoid official public statements about the program which might jeopardize national policy to gain international acceptance of it. Today the Soviets have knowledge and have not retaliated--hence that part of the problem has disappeared.

b. On the protection of the product, there have been a number of reasons for that. One was to keep the fact of the program secret, and this reason no longer applies. The second reason was to conceal the quantity and quality of the program, and it seems that the Soviets know most of the essential facts on these points. The third purpose in 1960 was not to give the Soviets help on developing their own program. Now we could give them the KH-4 product and probably the camera and not help them much.

5. [] agreed that the analogy to COMINT in justifying special compartmented security measures existed in 1960 but argued that no such analogy pertains in 1966 for two reasons. First, revelation of the fact of the program or its product now will not cut off the source. Second, unlike policy on COMINT, it is Government policy to gradually gain world-wide acceptance of satellite photography.

6. The Acting State Member said that one sometimes hears the argument, and he understood that it was made in the COMOR discussions, that once a paper has been classified then the burden is on those who wish to downgrade it to show some positive benefit. [] believes this overstates the intent of Executive Order 10501 which underlies the whole classification system and which in Section 3 calls for avoiding overclassification and in Section 4 for continuing review of classified material to downgrade or declassify that which no longer requires security protection in order to protect the integrity of the system. He expressed the concern that continuing to hold the fact of the reconnaissance program in a special security compartment is prejudicial to the integrity of the system.

25X1



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~~TOP SECRET~~

MEMO to Holders
USIB-D-41. 12/23
(COMOR-D-7/51)
29 August 1966
Limited Distribution



7. Although the COMOR report does not do so, the Acting State Member believed that USIB should weigh the security risks versus the benefits as follows:

a. With regard to relaxation of the fact of the program, on balance State proposes a SECRET level for the three propositions specified in the next to the last paragraph of Tab A. [redacted] thought that accepting something close to that formula would enhance the security of the system.

b. Regarding relaxation of the product, he thought that as to the KH-4 product, the original reasons for special handling have been greatly erroded. Therefore, there is much less security risk to weigh against the many benefits to be gained. [redacted] said that he was prepared to leave to the special committee the question of how fast and how far to go in downgrading.

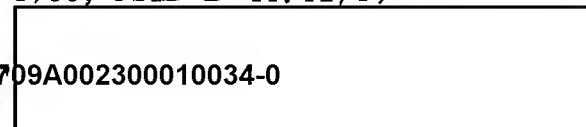
8. General Davis commented that it seemed to him that [redacted] had some good arguments. On the three propositions General Davis thought in the not too distant future these might be a good plan. However, he understands that what NASA wants and how they plan to use it is not clear. Therefore, General Davis believed that the COMOR Recommendations were the appropriate initial steps, after which the Board can consider the problem following NASA study.

9. The DIA Member believed that most of the comments by [redacted] were applicable to the paper the Board had previously considered on Security Handling of Satellite Reconnaissance Materials.* In defense of COMOR, General Carroll mentioned that the Board did get into the pros and cons in considering the earlier paper. Speaking of NASA, the DIA Member thought that it was all the more urgent to hold the line on the existing system since we did not know just how far they might want to go at this point. General Carroll was concerned that we might rapidly be on the way to losing our intelligence shirt, and felt that we should be most cautious about relaxing security controls until we could review the full intelligence implications in a more practical perspective. Regarding downgrading to SECRET, the controls over

- 4 -

*See USIB-D-41. 12/15 (COMOR-D-7/42) 13 September 1965; USIB-D-41. 12/18 (COMOR-D-7/45) 13 June 1966; USIB-D-41. 12/19 (COMOR-D-7/47) 11 July 1966.

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~~TOP SECRET~~

Memo to Holders
USIB-D-41. 12/23
(COMOR-D-7/51)
29 August 1966
Limited Distribution

dissemination of this classification are practically nonexistent, therefore, General Carroll believed that the fact of the program would then be known all over the Government. He agreed that the COMOR Recommendations were only an interim action, but he did not believe that we should go farther at this time.

10. The Chairman asked that the minutes show that the Acting State Member had made an extremely able presentation of the State Department viewpoint. It was thoughtful, tactful and on the mark. As to the broad implications of the NSAM Committee's Recommendations, however, Mr. Helms thought that the Board had now looked carefully at those. The Chairman said that he would like to close consideration of this item by accepting the majority COMOR Recommendations in USIB-D-41. 12/23 which he understood the other Members of the Board, except the Acting State Member, approved.

11. Mr. Helms then expressed his feelings on this matter. He noted that it was very complicated, and that a lot of issues as well as departmental questions and interests were involved. He stated that by temperament he did not like the necessity for compartmented handling, and he hoped that sometime soon the community can get a more rational means. However, we do have the system which has been in existence for some years. Mr. Helms emphasized that we are now heavily dependent on satellite photography and therefore we now have to adhere to the protection of that asset by minimum changes in our classification system. Mr. Helms recognized that the effort of the policy makers to push for the acceptance of satellite photography was a proper course of action. However, he believed that the intelligence community was right in taking a restrictive view on relaxation. He pointed out that the Soviets had known we were flying the U-2 over the USSR but never said anything publicly about it until one had been shot down. He thought that the same attitude would apply to our satellite reconnaissance. Mr. Helms said he would not like to embarrass the Soviets by telling them how good our photography of the USSR is. Moreover, Mr. Helms stated that [] he did not have the slightest doubt that this was a real breakthrough which he thought we must keep and cherish. Mr. Helms noted that recently when he had testified on this subject

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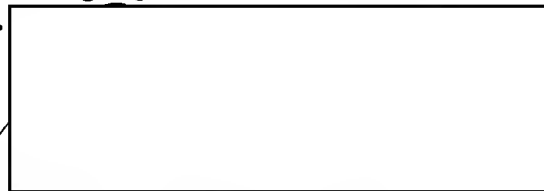
Memo to Holders
USIB-D-41. 12/23
(COMOR-D-7/51)
29 August 1966
Limited Distribution

25X1



before Congressman Mahon and his CIA Appropriation Subcommittee, he had been very severely enjoined to keep this very valuable intelligence asset as secret as possible. Mr. Helms stated that, last but not least, as Director of Central Intelligence, he was charged with the security of intelligence sources and methods, and would therefore have to come down in support of maintaining our classification system as tight as possible.

12. In light of the above discussion, the Chairman determined that, based on the consensus of USIB except for the Acting State Member, the COMOR Recommendations in paragraph 6. a., b. and c. of USIB-D-41. 12/23 were approved.



for Executive Secretary

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